

# S E R M O N

PREACHED

On Occasion of the FAST,

*April 11, 1744;*

*At Castlegate, Nottingham:*

From MATT. viii. 25.

*And his Disciples came to him, and awoke him,  
saying, Lord, save us; we perish.*

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By JAMES SLOSS, M.A.

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O U R Blessed Lord, having finished his unparallel'd Sermon on the Mount, an account whereof we have in the three preceding Chapters ; when he was come down from it, great Multitudes followed him, and he performed many Cures upon them. Then he entered into a Ship, his Disciples accompanying him, *And behold, there arose a great Tempest in the Sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the Waves : but he was asleep. Then his Disciples came unto him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us ; we perish. Upon which he arose and rebuked the Winds and the Sea, and there was a great Calm.*

IN order to explain and apply this passage of Scripture, to the purposes of this Solemn Fast-day; I propose

I. In the first place to make some Observations upon the Text and Context, shewing  
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wherein the Case of the Disciples, in these their present dangerous Circumstances, and ours agree.

II. I shall shew in what respects we may be said to be in a perishing Condition, that so we may be excited to cry to the Almighty with so much more earnestness and fervency to save us from perishing.

III. To shew that our Help is only in the Lord.

IV. I shall shew what help we must cry to God for, and in what respects we ought to apply to him for Salvation.

I return to the first of these, to offer a few remarks on the Text and Context: and in the first place, I observe it is taken notice of in the 23d verse, that our Blessed Lord and his Disciples were in a Ship. This holds forth to us the state of the Church militant, they are in a Ship with Christ; where Christ and his Disciples are, there is a Church without all controversy, whether it be in a House, or a Ship, or on a Hill-side: It is not Wood, or Stone, after whatever manner consecrated, that makes a Church; but the Presence of Christ, by his Spirit and Power making Sinners real Disciples, teaching them effectually as never Man taught, making them willing by a day of his Power to submit to him as their Lord and Master, that constitutes a Church.

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THIS Church of Christ was typified by the Ark of *Noah*, which saved all that entered into it; so Salvation in an ordinary way is only to be had within the pale of the visible Church; where Christ speaks to us by his Doctrine, and reveals his Arm, that a Gospel-Report may be believed, so as that Sinners are made real Disciples thereby, there the Church is; this is the Ark that saves from the deluge of the divine Wrath; here is the Ship that wafts Sinners safely over to the eternal Regions of Bliss; therein we pass all the Waves, and ride out the Storms of the troublesome Sea of a tempestuous World. We have our All in this bottom, and our Pilot will keep safe that good thing we have committed to him, against that Day, when we shall land in glory.

'Tis true, all who are taken into the Ship of the visible Church, by a bare external Profession, when they are not true Disciples, *Israelites* indeed, are not carried to Bliss, nor do they enter upon the possession of the Land promised only to true Believers; as there were both clean and unclean in *Noah's* Ark, so there are both good and bad, such whose Hearts are right with God, and those who are not so, taken into external Communion with the visible Church. An external Communion with the Saints, if we are only hypocritical and carnal Professors, will not save us.

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THE Church is fitly represented to us by the Similitude and Resemblance of a Ship, both on account of the Beauty of its compacted Frame, and its Strength: *Jerusalem* is built as a City that is compacted together from the Head of the Church, even Christ, the whole Body fitly joined together, by that which every Joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body, to the edifying of itself in Love; she has a Flag whereby she is terrible for Strength, as an Army with Banners.

THE Church has all the tackle of a Ship, she steers her Course by the Compass of the Word; her Affections serve as Sails to carry her to her designed Port, when the North-Wind awakes, and the South-Wind comes to fill them; there is the Anchor of Hope, sure and stedfast fixed within the Vail, taking fast hold on the Merits of Christ; there are Passengers aboard this Vessel, bound from Earth to Heaven: Believers do not settle here, this is not their Rest, they are in search for a heavenly Country: This Ship the Church is richly freighted, it has the valuable Cargo of the Souls of Men, and the Truths of God. As a Man of War she must in her militant state fight her way through all difficulties; to which she is exposed; there are many Pirates, whose Attacks she is exposed to; but stronger is he that is in her, than he that is in  
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the World ; the gates of Hell shall not be able to prevail against her, she has a skilful Pilot who sits at the helm, the Government is on his shoulders, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth ; all Judgement is committed to him in Heaven and Earth, all Power is given to him. Let his People therefore confide in his Power and Wisdom, he is able to save to the uttermost.

THIS brings me to a second Observation from this Context, *viz.* that the Church of Christ may sometimes be in very imminent Danger ; we may gather this from the 24th verse, where it is said, *There arose a great Tempest in the Sea, insomuch that the Ship was covered with the Waves.* As our Saviour and his Disciples being in this Ship, fitly resembles the Church of God in the World ; so the Circumstances this Ship, wherein Christ and his Disciples were, was in, do not unfitly shadow forth to us and represent the dangerous situation the Church of God may be brought into here, through a concurrence of various Dispensations of divine Providence, that in a very remarkable manner seem to conspire to promote her overthrow and ruin. As there arose a great Tempest in the Sea, insomuch that this Ship, wherein Christ and his Disciples were, was covered with the Waves ; so the Church of Christ is sometimes brought to such a dangerous situation, that all the Powers of the World may seem to conspire against her ; she is often in perils,  
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it is through many tribulations she gets safe to the harbour; many Dangers from without threaten destruction, all the Elements conspire her ruin, winds and waves, and the fire of hot Persecution; so that if it was not for the special protection of Heaven, she could not stand it: There are many rocks on which this Ship is in danger of splitting, the Powers of this World set themselves to oppose the Interests of Christ's Kingdom. *The Heathen rage, and Kings of the Earth combine against the Lord's Anointed; yet they but imagine a vain thing, the Lord will dash them in pieces like a Potter's vessel, and break them with his rod of Iron; he will strike through Kings in the day of his Wrath; when he sends the rod of his Strength out of Zion, he will rule in the very midst of his Enemies.*

WHEN the Enemies of God and his People say, *Come, let us cut them off from being a Nation, that the Name of Israel may be no more in Remembrance;* when they consult together with one consent, and are confederate against God; when the Tabernacles of Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, and the Hagarens, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, the Philistines, with the Inhabitants of Tyre and Assur joined with them, put forth their utmost efforts against the interests of Religion, *the Lord will preserve his hidden ones, in the secret of his Presence, and cover them with the shadow of his wings; but he will do unto those as unto the Midianites,*



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Midianites, as to Sisera, as to Jabin at the brook of Kison; when they say, let us take the houses of God to ourselves in possession, the Lord will make them as stubble before the wind, he will persecute them with his Tempest, and make them afraid of his Storm. He has done so already for these Lands, and if we turn to him with penitent Hearts, he will do so still; his Hand is not shorten'd, but it can yet save us; nor is his Ear heavy, but it will yet hear; if we are found crying in sincerity, he will do it for his Mercy's sake, for his Interest's sake, that Men may know that he whose Name alone is *J E H O V A H*, is the most High over all the Earth: He will do it for his Glory's sake, that that ambitious, turbulent, deceitful and perfidious Monarch, who has been the cause of all those confusions in *Europe*, may know, that whereas he exalts himself, and grasps at universal Monarchy, yet the Lord is above him. Let us therefore fervently cry to the King of Kings, that he would put his hook into his nose, and his bridle into his lips, and turn him back by the way by which he came. The Lord, because his rage against him, and his tumult came up to his ears on the wings of the Prayers of his Saints, has in part done so already, blessed be his Name, in the glorious Victory at *Dettingen*, by the instrumentality of our most Gracious Sovereign, and since by the disappointment of an intended Invasion of this

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Island ; and we have the surest Prospect that he will yet do it in a higher measure, if the Duties incumbent on us this day, are performed in a suitable manner by us ; if with unfeigned Hearts we humble ourselves in the sight of God, imploring his Mercy to pardon the guilt that lies heavy on these Lands of *Britain and Ireland* ; if in Sincerity we repent of the evil of our ways, renting our hearts for our many provocations, turning to the Lord with all our heart, loosing the bands of Sin, and in other respects acting as becometh the character of a penitent People ; our gracious God will yet turn unto us to do us good, he will yet take us under his Protection, and shew that he hath not cast us off, no weapon formed against us shall prosper.

BUT to return ; the Church of Christ is many times in very imminent danger ; this Ship meets with *Quick-sands and Flats* ; Religion is often at a low ebb, every where spoken against, and the power of Godliness is sneered at by a carnal World, and many times all the temporal Advantages are on the side of Impiety ; insomuch that if it was not for the singular Providence of God, that sits at the helm, and steers this Boat wisely, she could not fail to founder on these Flats.

SOMETIMES this Ship is tossed with Tempests and Storms of Persecution, that are raised against her through that Enmity that is naturally between the Seed of the Woman  
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and that of the Serpent; many such Storms she has weathered out, since the giving of that first Promise, that the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Head of the Serpent. Tho' the Serpent is suffered to bruise the Heel of the Woman's Seed, in the Sufferings of Christ and his Members, yet the Head is still safe; thro' the good hand of God on his Church, she has hitherto been preserved, God hath hitherto helped and will help. *The mountain of the House of the Lord shall be exalted above the top of all the mountains; whatever attempts may be made by the adversary to tread down God's Sanctuary, a Seed shall still be found to serve him, that shall be counted to the Lord for a Generation.*

BESIDES these dangers the Church of God is exposed to from her Enemies without, like a Ship, she is liable to the misfortune of Schisms and Divisions from within; that are ready to spring a leak in her, which would not fail many times to be very fatal, did not a gracious God heal these Breaches, cure our Animosities, and one way or another bind up our wounds. Amidst all these disasters and dangers the Church of Christ is exposed to, especially when she is actually under many of them at this present Juncture, we had need to cry earnestly to God, that he would save us, lest we perish; that he who stills the noise of the Seas, the noise of their Waves, and the tumults of the People, would arise and

rebuke the Winds and the Sea, that there may be a great Calm.

3. WE may observe, that Christ sometimes carries it in the Dispensations of his Providence towards his Church as if he was asleep; he suffers sometimes his People's Enemies to go very far, and he lets the reins loose to such a pitch, that the wicked are confident of their Success, and promise Prosperity to themselves in their wicked, malicious, and cruel Undertakings: they are ready to say, God hath forsaken them; persecute and take them, for there is none to deliver them. Yea, such sometimes may be the gloomy aspect of things, that Believers themselves, through the weakness of their Faith, may even be ready to despond, when they have been time after time attacked by a restless and cruel Enemy, and have been often upon the point of being swallowed up by him, and have again and again hardly, yea, even miraculously escaped, as a Bird out of the snare of the crafty Fowler: I say, in such circumstances God's own People are even ready to say, We can scarcely always escape at this rate; surely one day we shall fall by the hand of this Enemy. Sometimes God's own People are afraid of being cast off for ever, they look on themselves as given up to the Fury of their Enemies, and counted as sheep for the slaughter, and that the Captain of their Salvation and only Deliverer is as in a sleep, and unconcerned about them,



them, whether they sink or swim. This was the case of the Church, *Pf. xxii. 23, &c. For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord, arise, cast us not off forever; wherefore hidest thou thy Face, and forgettest our Affliction and Oppression? for our Soul is bowed down to the dust, our belly cleaveth to the earth; arise, for our help, and redeem us for thy Mercy's sake.* But tho' God's own People may entertain such a mistaken notion of the Superintendant of the Universe, whose eyes continually run to and fro through the whole Earth, beholding the Evil and the Good; yet the Watchman of *Israel* neither slumbers nor sleeps. 'Tis true, as Man he had all the finless Infirmities that accompany our Nature, and being very much fatigued, declaiming so long in the open air to a numerous Audience, frail Humanity could no longer bear up without some refreshment of nature by Sleep; therefore after he came down from the Mount, and had finished the laborious work of the Day, our Blessed Lord, who had no other where to lay his head, laid himself down in the Ship, and was indeed asleep, as to his human Nature; but his divine Nature is ever wakeful, his Eyes see and his Eye-lids try the Children of Men; and tho' he may be silent, and not appear to take vengeance immediately on the wicked, yet they are mistaken, if they imagine he is such a one as themselves: he will sharply reprove them

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here, or call them to a strict Account hereafter. Many times he winks at the manners of sinners, when he is far from being asleep. Let them not look upon his Long-suffering to be Unconcernedness; tho' Sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed, yet let Sinners beware lest they set their hearts fully in them to do evil. *The Lord will at length no longer keep silence, no longer hold his peace and be still; but he will arise, and pluck his right-hand out of his bosom, and make it evident that all his Paths, even his silent and still Paths, are Mercy and Truth only, to such as keep his Covenant and Testimonies, but Justice to his adversaries.*

WHICH leads me to a fourth Observation from this Text, which is, That when the Lord seems in the conduct of his Providence to be asleep, and sits still without stirring in behalf of his Church, the best means to awake him, that he may bestir himself and appear for his People, and interpose in behalf of his own Interest, when it seems to be in a sinking perishing Condition, is PRAYER. Here the Disciples cry earnestly in the text, *Lord, save us; we perish.* A perishing cry is a loud cry, all remaining strength is exerted in the last effort of a cry for Help, when a Person finds that all means himself can use are ineffectual: And indeed, if a spirit of Slumber and a woful Security did not possess us in these Kingdoms, such are the dangerous circumstances



cumstances on many accounts, the Church of Christ among us seems to be in, that we could not help crying, and crying fervently and loudly with the Disciples in the Text, *Lord, save us; we perish.*

WHILE there is life, there is Hope; and if we had but strength to cry, there is Help; the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much. Prayer has done wonders for God's People, nor is it at all the least symptom of the hopefulness of our condition; and that there is Help for us, that it hath pleased God to put it into the heart of his Servant our most Gracious Sovereign King GEORGE, to call his People at this juncture, to this seasonable and necessary Duty of crying to the Lord to save us, by appointing in his dominions a solemn Fast, to be religiously observed this Day for that Purpose; and may the Lord himself prepare our hearts for this Duty, and cause his ear to hear our Cry. Was a spirit of Prayer and Supplication raised among us, it would be a token for Good, that the Lord would not cast us off, nor give us up to the hands of our Enemies. Nothing more effectually rouses the Almighty, than the fervent and assiduous Cries of his Children; they never fail to prevail when they wrestle with him in Prayer; he can't resist their Solicitations, he is better pleased to hear them cry to him than to give them a repulse. With how much condescension does he represent him-

himself as conquered with the charms of his People's Voice, making their moan, and crying to him out of the deeps of their Distresses, and under a sense of their unworthiness? *Cant. ii. 14. O my Dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy Countenance, let me hear thy Voice: for sweet is thy Voice, and thy Countenance is comely.* When once a spirit of Prayer is awakened among a People, the Lord will not continue long asleep.

THE Lord is under the Obligation of his own Promise to hearken to the Cries of his Children: *Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you; whatsoever they ask in Christ's Name believing, they shall receive. Ps. xci. 15. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.* So far is the Lord from refusing to answer his People, so far from taking it ill, when they unbosom themselves to him, even but with groanings, which they cannot make distinct Language of, that he is rather displeased with their shyness and their silence, and complains, *hitherto ye have asked nothing.*

BELIEVERS have manifold experience of the truth and faithfulness of these Promises of Audience and Acceptance that are made to them; so had *David*, when he cried to God with his Voice, *he gave ear unto him, Psal. lxxvii.*



lxxvii. 1. Were our circumstances never so forlorn, our case never so desperate and low, there is Help and Hope through the mighty Influence of irresistible Prayer: *Psal. xxxiv. 4. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. Ver. 5. They looked unto him and were lightened; and their Faces were not ashamed. Ver. 6. This poor Man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his Troubles.* The Lord will regard the Supplication of the destitute, and will not despise their Prayer, that comes from unfeigned Lips and a contrite Heart; *a broken and a contrite heart, he will not despise.* And according as we make conscience of this Duty of Prayer and Supplication to God, not barely on a Fast-day, but habitually in the course of our Life, and especially while the rod of God is shaken over our heads, and the sword threatens us, or are remiss; so we may expect it will fare with us, as to our Success against our Enemies. While *Moses's* Hands were held up, *Israel* prevailed; when they fell, *Amalek* prevailed. God's Children have many great and precious Promises made to them concerning what he will do for them in the times of their Distress; yet for these things he will be enquired of by the House of *Israel*.

In the fifth and last place, we may observe from this Context, that however silent the Lord may be on some occasions, in not ap-

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pearing in behalf of his Church, according to the desire and expectation of his People, but sometimes seems to be asleep; yet he is always with them, even when he seems to take no notice of them. This was the case with the Disciples, tho' their Master was asleep, yet he was with them in the Ship; and it is the case often with the Church of Christ, when he suffers her Enemies to prevail very far, yet he hath not cast off all Care of her, he is still with her to save her from utter ruin, tho' she may sometimes be reduced to very great Extremities: Why then should God's People despond, even when they wade deepest in Troubles? Tho' they should even walk thro' the Valley of the shadow of Death, they need not fear any evil, since he is with them; his rod and his staff may comfort them: his People may claim the same Promises made to his Church of old; and he speaks the same language to them now, that he did to his People formerly: *Isa. xli. 13. I the Lord thy God will hold thy right-hand, saying unto thee, fear not, I will help thee. Ver. 14. Fear not thou worm Jacob, and ye Men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing-instrument, having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff; thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirl-*



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*whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.* The Lord has promised never to leave his People nor forsake them; let the Church's case be never so low, they need not fear what Man can do, since the Lord is with them. So much for the Observations from the Text and Context.

II. I proceed now to the second thing; which was to shew in what respects we may be said to be in a perishing Condition. And in the first place, it is by no means with respect to any disadvantages we labour under as to the civil Government, God in his Providence has set over us; as if we were under the tyrannical slavery of arbitrary Rulers, as some discontented unreasonable Men have been ready to misrepresent: No, blessed be God, we have great matter of Thanksgiving for the Blessings we enjoy under the prudent Administration and mild Government of our most Gracious Sovereign his Majesty King GEORGE; whom God long preserve, to perpetuate all those Mercies to us, we have so long enjoyed under his auspicious Government. Yet, notwithstanding we have all the Advantages a happy and free People can desire, does it not look with a gloomy Aspect on our Circumstances, that there should be found any disaffected to such a Government among us? much more that there should be found any among us so

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regardless of their own Interest and the publick Good, as to endeavour the overthrow of our happy Establishment, whereby our Rights and Privileges both civil and sacred are so well secured?

MAY it not raise Indignation in every generous Mind to think that there should be any found who eat of our Sovereign's Bread, and yet lift up the heel against him? These secret Plots and Combinations against his Majesty's Person and Government, on whom all our hopes, under God, of the enjoyment of Liberty and Property depend, loudly call us to supplicate the Throne of Grace, that an omniscient God would bring to light every secret Machination of fraudulent and crafty *Achitophels*, or render their wicked Devices and destructive Schemes abortive; that our gracious God would heal all our Divisions at home, if any yet remain to be healed, and countenance our Arms abroad, that his Majesty's Throne may be established in Righteousness, and that he may be a happy Instrument in the Almighty's Hand of checking the Ambition of *France*, promoting the Protestant Interest, and maintaining the Ballance of Power, that at this Juncture is in the greatest hazard of being overturned.

AND seeing the pursuit of these glorious Purposes, which our most Gracious Sovereign has all along, with an invariable Constancy and inflexible Fidelity, had in his View, has



drawn upon him the Resentment of such who have been watching every opportunity to introduce Popery into these Lands, and overthrow the Ballance of *Europe*; let us cry mightily to our God, that he would interpose in his Providence in some such remarkable manner, so over-ruling the Affairs of *Europe*, as that Mankind may have a glaring proof how odious publick Robbery and unjust Invasions of the Rights and Properties of Mankind are in his sight; how hateful perfidious Treachery, Breach of publick Faith, and solemn Covenants among Princes here on Earth, are to him who sits in his Throne in Heaven, beholding the Children of Men. And since States and Commonwealths, as such, can't be reckoned with, and either rewarded or punished in a future State, because they only subsist here in this Life, and have no Being in another World; tho' the particular Persons that compose them may be brought to a trial in their own Persons, and must all stand before the Judgement-seat of God, to receive their particular Sentence according to the Deeds done in each Body: Therefore let us address the Judge of all the Earth, who cannot but do righteously, that he would frown by some publick token of his Displeasure on those States that in a more notorious manner have broken in upon the common Laws of Nature and Nations, and violated Publick Faith; that the success of publick Robbers,  
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and perfidious Truce-breakers may not give occasion to the wicked to blaspheme either the Holiness and Justice of God, in not punishing the wicked, and protecting the Innocent; or his Providence, as not taking any notice of the affairs of Men. In fine, let us plead with God by fervent Prayer, that he would regard the Righteousness of our Cause, as the case stands between us and our Enemies; not that we dare plead any merit in his sight, or venture to be dealt with according to our Innocency, as the case stands betwixt us and our God: no, if he should mark Iniquity against us, we could not stand. But such is the Equity of our Cause, and so injurious are our Enemies, that with confidence we can appeal to a righteous God to judge betwixt us: we may justly say, they are our Enemies without a Cause. Let us cry to God to judge us, with the Psalmist, *Psal. xliii. 1, Judge me, O God, and plead my Cause against an ungodly Nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust Man.*

2. RELIGION may be said to be in a sinking perishing way among us, in respect of the prevailing Apostacy from the ways of God to be found universally amongst all ranks of Men from the highest to the lowest degree; all Flesh have corrupted their ways, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, we are full of bruises and putrifying sores. We have all contributed to the common guilt in



a lesser or higher degree ; so that we seem to be ripe for a stroke of the divine Justice, if his Mercy, in pouring down upon us a spirit of Repentance, doth not prevent it. Where is the society ? where is the family ? where is the person among us, that can clear himself and say, he has not had a hand in aggravating the common Guilt ? Have we not all then the greatest reason to cry vehemently to God in the words of the Disciples in the Text, *Lord, save us ; we perish ?* Ought not a Sense of national, personal, and family Guilt, and the just demerit of the Sins of all sorts we are chargeable with in the sight of God, excite us to cry earnestly to God, that he would not mark Iniquity against us, nor enter into judgment with these Lands, to deal with us as our Iniquities deserve ; but that in the midst of deserved Wrath, he would remember Mercy ; and notwithstanding our many Provocations, whereby we have forfeited his Favour, and justly incurred his Displeasure, he would yet appear for us against those who rise up against us.

THE Lord in the Riches of his Mercy has many times appeared for and kept these Lands, when they have been brought low, and that too against these very Enemies we have now to do withal : but when he came to save us, I dare say he never found *Britain* and *Ireland* involved in those circumstances of complicated guilt they are chargeable with at this day. Many a time he has saved *Britain-Calvinist*,  
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*Britain-Protestant*, against a Popish Anti-Christian party : but what he will do with *Britain* so far sunk in Deism, so far overspread with the Leprosy of *Arianism* and *Socinianism*, and other Heresies that so universally abound with us, must be left to the infinite Patience and boundless Mercy of our gracious God himself to determine.

3. WE seem to be in a perishing declining way, in regard of the sensible decay of practical Godliness among us, and undisguised Piety. Are there not many, alas ! that have not so much as the very Form of Godliness, not to speak of the want of the Power ? The very Form is lost. Are there not many that bear the Christian Name, whom if we view, as to their conduct in their Families, in their Closets, in their Shops, or any where else, there is hardly any thing like Religion to be seen with them ; their whole Deportment proclaims them Atheists, or at best Deists, owning nothing but the Religion of Nature, that is incapable of pointing out the way of Salvation to lost Sinners ; rejecting Revelation altogether : or if they profess Christianity, and own the Name, and some of its general Principles, yet how miserably is it corrupted and changed from its primitive Simplicity with them !

AND where Christianity is professed by others in more Purity, yet how careless are the generality of Professors, in comparison with  
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what they have been even of late years? I can't help taking notice here of that Contempt of publick Ordinances many of this Congregation in particular have sunk into of late, which is matter of deep Humiliation to us on this Fast-day, in regard that, notwithstanding we have considerably increased within these six or seven years, yet our week-day Lectures are sometimes even thinner, than they were before that time: A lamentable evidence of the decay of a spiritual Appetite and Taste for the heavenly Food! May God himself reach a conviction to the Consciences of such, who in his Providence have an Opportunity to attend with more diligence, and yet are guilty in this matter; may he by his Grace enable them to correct their practice.

THIS is no doubt the fruit of that decay of Piety, that is to be found even with those, who have the root of the matter in them, and have something of the power of Godliness thro' the Revelation of the arm of the Lord; it is no doubt the effect of a decay of the strength, liveliness, and vivacity of Grace, that is very obvious in many of God's Children. Alas, how is the Love of many grown cold in comparison of what their first Love, the Kindness of their youth, and the Love of their espousals have been! It is not with many as it has been, when the candle of the Lord shone bright upon their Tabernacle; and they could very sensibly feel the light of

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his Countenance lifted up upon them, which raised such transports of Joy, such solacing measures of solid gladness in their Hearts, as infinitely transcend all comforts of corn and wine in their greatest abundance. Do not the most eminent of God's Children complain, *our leanness, our leanness, woe's us our leanness testifieth against us?* The weak remains of Grace that is in them, they feel even ready to die.

SINCE then this is the state of Religion, since the great bulk are either openly profane, or at best but formal hypocrites; since there are such symptoms of decay, even with the most eminent of the Saints; have we not the greatest reason to humble ourselves this day in God's sight, and repent in dust and ashes, imploring the divine Help in these our sinking perishing circumstances, crying earnestly with the Disciples in our Text, *Lord, save us; we perish.*

4. WE may be said to be in a perishing Condition on account of prevailing Error, and abominable Heresies, that threaten the overthrow even of Christianity itself. Are there not many amongst us that utterly deny all revealed Religion? many who deny the Lord that bought them, degrading him to the level of a Creature? Do not others deny the original Corruption of the human Nature, thro' the Fall of Man? others the necessity of the imputation of Christ's Righteousness to the sinner,



sinner, in order to the Justification of his Person in the sight of God? affirming we are justified by our own inherent Righteousness, which is the very grossest of all the Popish Errors: Yet, alas! how much does this very Error prevail among us, notwithstanding it is condemned by the eleventh and twelfth Articles of the Church of *England*, and all other Protestant Confessions of Faith?

It is well if a Popish Party abroad don't make a handle of this very thing, and take encouragement to spread their other abominable Doctrines among us; promising themselves certain Success, looking upon us as ripe to fall in with their Delusions, since already we so generally swallow down this grossest of all their Errors. What can their trafficking Jesuits fear we shall stick at, since we can digest an Error that most of all the Popish Doctrines strikes against the Foundations of the Protestant Faith?

I AM fully satisfied, many who maintain the Justification of their Persons, (I say of their Persons, for Protestants own the Justification of their Faith by their Works) by their own Works, and not by the Righteousness of Christ only, from their heart abhor a Popish Pretender; and blessed be the Lord, the Attachment to a Popish Pretender's Interest is far from being either so great, or so universal, as it is to this Popish Doctrine; but what a pity is it that any, who by profession are Prote-

stants, should give such occasion to a Popish Party to look upon them as friendly to them, by maintaining this grossest of all their Errors? May we not be said to be in a back-sliding declining way, when any who profess to be Protestants look so fully *Rome-ward*? When things are come to this dismal pass with us, have we not the strongest Reason to cry out, *Lord, help us; we perish?*

HAVE not a Popish Party too great a handle given them to boast that *Britain* is disposed to receive the idolatrous, the abominable, and the ridiculous Errors of *Rome*, when so many so openly profess the very grossest of them all, the Justification of their Persons by their own Works? Let us all then with united hearts cry fervently to the Lord to save us from this prevailing Error, for thousands have perished by it, nay it hath killed its ten thousands.

ARE there not others among us, who striving to keep this Error at the greatest distance, are drove by the artifice of the cunning Adversary, who cares not by what means he incommodes the Interest of Christ, if so be he may but any way hinder the Success of the Gospel, to another Extreme, equally advantageous to the Interest of Satan, and detrimental to the Kingdom of Christ; who can't bear to hear the necessity of Holiness insisted on; no, not even as the native fruit of a new Creature, and the genuine produce of a lively Faith?



Faith? without which it is impossible to justify our Faith from the imputation and charge of being dead, hypocritical, and not at all the Faith of God's Elect; as if without Holiness it was at all possible to see the Lord.

IT is greatly to be feared many of the Elect themselves are in a perishing condition, through the prevalency of this Error in many places; so that if it was possible even many of them would finally be deceived by it: but the Lord knows who are his, and they shall be kept by the Power of God through Faith, unto Salvation. But many who pretend to be of that happy number, actually perish by this pernicious soul-destroying, Gospel-overturning Error. So that what by one, what by the other of these Errors, the Churches of Christ in many places seem to be in a perishing way, unless the Lord send speedy help: and which is most threatening, and which is likely to prove most fatal and pernicious in our case, is, that those who should be the means of our Cure, are themselves most deeply infected; those who ought to give the alarm against these Errors, are themselves perishing by them; and where the blind lead the blind, both are likely to perish in the ditch; unless God in his rich Mercy stretch forth his hand to save them.

III. I COME now to the third thing; which was to shew that our Help is only in the Lord;

Lord; that we may seek to him only for Salvation. As the condition of the Disciples here in the Context, by reason of the tempestuous Storm that was risen on the Sea, was beyond the reach of ordinary means of Deliverance, so from what has been said concerning our Malady, it will plainly appear, that none but God himself can be our Physician; none but he, who has universal Nature at his command, whom the Wind and Seas obey, can controul our Disorder, and bring Order out of our Confusions: we are too far gone in our distemper to be cured without some remarkable interposition of divine Providence in our behalf. The whole Head is sick, the whole Heart is faint, we are full of bruises from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, insomuch that in God only is our Help. In all cases, even in the most ordinary, Salvation belongs to the Lord; but especially in these that are most desperate, as ours seems to be. Let us therefore cry to him, directing our Supplication to the God of our Salvation, saying, with the Disciples, *Lord, save us; we perish.*

Do we want Salvation from the crying Guilt of our sin, which is the cause of God's contending with us at this day by the Sword? none can pardon this but he. *Isa. xliii. 24, 25. But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions*



*sions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* This is God's prerogative; who can forgive sins but God? While our Enemies, who are covered with the darkness of Popish delusions, have recourse to their Idols that cannot save them, let us lift our hearts with our eyes and our hands to the Living God, that he may be propitious to us, and take away our sin, that we may not die. Under a deep Sense of abounding Impiety, scarce daring to lift up our eyes to God, but ashamed to come into his Presence, and standing afar off, let us with the penitent Publican cry earnestly to the Lord in his words, *God be merciful to us sinners.* Let us fervently pray to God with united Voices and Hearts, that he would not let our iniquity be our ruin; but that in the midst of deserved wrath he would remember Mercy, and blot out as a cloud our Transgressions, and as a thick cloud our Sins; that he would take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.

Do we stand in need of Salvation from the power of Sin, that prevails so much among all ranks and orders of Men among us, who have so universally departed from the ways of God? The Lord himself only can cure this; let us look to him, that by a day of his Power he would turn us, and we shall be turned. Until he draw us, we cannot run after him. Let us fervently implore the Influences of his Grace, who is a Prince exalted to give  
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Repentance, that he would heal all our backslidings, and love us freely: That he would be unto us as the dew, that we may again grow as the Lily, and cast forth our roots as *Lebanon*. O Lord God, cease we beseech thee; *by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small!* If ever a work of reformation be set a-foot, that wonderful work must be the Lord's doing; in vain is Salvation in any shape, temporal or spiritual, sought for from any other quarter, than from *Jehovah*; in him only is our Help, he is the Hope of *Israel*, and the only Saviour thereof: *Not by Might, nor by Power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.*

Do we decline in point of practical Godliness? Let us look to God himself, that he would give us of his rich Grace to repent and do our first Works, that he would strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die; let us cry with the Psalmist, *Psal. xii. 1. Help Lord, for the godly Man ceaseth; for the faithful fail, from among the children of Men.*

Do we perish in point of abounding and greatly prevailing Errors? Let us have our eyes towards God, who alone can chain up Satan, who has gone forth as a lying spirit in the mouth of false Prophets: Let us fervently pray, that he would send forth his Light and his Truth, that this Sun of Righteousness may arise and shine bright, with healing in  
his



his wings, that whereas Darkneſs hath covered the Earth, and groſs Darkneſs the People, the Lord may ariſe upon us, and his Glory be ſeen upon us, *that the Gentiles may come to this Light, and Kings to the Brightneſs of his Riſing.*

IT is a hopeful Symptom in our caſe, that how far ſoever *Deiſm, Arianiſm, Socinia- niſm*, thoſe vile Anti-chriſtian Hereſies have got footing among us ; yet they could never obtain the countenance of publick Authority, but the Wiſdom of the Nation, and the Legiſlative Power have rather borne their teſti- mony in the moſt publick manner againſt them, and declared them unworthy the Be- nefit of their Protection, and excluded them from the advantages even of a Toleration ; and if any inferior Magiſtrates, contrary to the Laws of the Land, have been found Abet- ters or Encouragers of theſe Hereſies, ſuch corners of the Land are loudly called, upon a ſolemn Faſt-day, with the deepeſt Hu- mility, to confeſs before God this aggra- vated Guilt ; with whomſoever this iniquity is found, ſuch *Achans* are the Troublers of our *Iſrael*, who have tranſgreſſed in this ac- curſed thing.

IN fine, do numerous Enemies and potent Kingdoms riſe up againſt us without a Cauſe ? Let us make the Lord only our Refuge, even in this. Let us ſpread our caſe before a righ- teous God, who takes the Cauſe of the inno-

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cent and oppressed under his Protection, saying with *Jehoshaphat*, 2 Chron. xx. 12. O our God, wilt thou not judge them, for we have no might against this great Company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. Let us not trust in an Arm of flesh, our Armies, or Navies, our Friends and Allies, but in the Living God: Let us say, *Asker shall not save us*, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in thee the Fatherless findeth mercy.

IV. I COME now to the last thing I proposed to speak to, which was to shew, for an use of direction upon this day of solemn Humiliation, what that Salvation or Help is, that, upon such an occasion as this is, we ought to call upon God for; and since I have anticipated already in a great measure what might have come under this Head, I shall endeavour to discuss what I have further to add, in a very few things.

IN the first place, let us be particularly importunate with God in praying for national Mercies, that the Hope of *Israel*, and the Saviour thereof in times of trouble, would not be as a Stranger in our Land, or a way-faring Man, that turns aside to tarry for a night; but that the Lord, who is in the midst of us,  
by



by whose Name we are called, would not leave us, that he would stir up his Strength and come and save us. Especially let our Hearts tremble for the Ark of God, and earnestly beg that the Throne of Christ may endure for ever among us, and that he would not remove our candlestick out of its place, but give us grace to repent; remembering from whence we have fallen, that we may return to our first Love, and do our first Works: that the Lord may not do to us as he did to *Shiloh*, where he set his Name at the first; but that he would be a wall of fire round about us, and the Glory in the midst of us; and that over all the Glory he would create a Defence, and maintain what he hath so graciously wrought for us.

LET us earnestly beg that our Liberties and Privileges, civil and sacred, may be maintained to us; and as our gracious God has often appeared for our Help on former Occasions, when our Enemies have risen up against us, and wonderfully delivered us beyond our own expectations, and to the confusion of our Enemies and their sore Disappointment; now that again a restless Popish Party would make a Captain to return unto *Egypt*, let us fervently implore the Mercy of God that their wicked designs may be defeated. And as God in his kind Providence has hitherto given a remarkable Blessing to the

Protestant Succession in the Illustrious House of HANOVER, so that the Entail of the *British* Crown on that august Family has, by the good hand of our God thereupon, proved a successful and happy expedient for the Security of our Rights both civil and sacred; let us earnestly cry to God, that he would still smile on that Family, and pour down his richest Blessings on them, and make them a strong Bulwark against Popery, and all the ambitious Designs of arbitrary Power; that this lamp that he hath ordained may be preserved, that Generations to come may know the Lord, even Children yet to be born; that this Royal Family may be the happy Instruments of continuing with us, and transmitting to our latest Posterity all the Blessings of Liberty and Property we have enjoyed since their Accession to the Crown; that the hopes of our Popish Adversaries may be entirely frustrated; and that that deadly Wound that hath been given to the Beast in *Britain*, may not be healed any more.

LET us beg particularly for Blessings upon our King on the Throne, that, especially at this critical Conjunction, he would give to him his Judgements, that his Throne may be established in Righteousness, that he may be made glad exceedingly with God's Countenance,



tenance, that his Enemies may be clothed with shame, and that on himself the Crown may flourish; that he may have Wisdom given him as an Angel of God, that he may be a happy instrument of restoring Peace to *Europe*, and establishing it on such a solid Foundation, as it may never be in the Power of any ambitious Monarch again to disturb it; and that in the issue, all the Confusions that are, and have been in *Europe*, may terminate in the advancement of the Protestant Interest, and the ruin Anti-christ.

LET us earnestly pray for a Blessing upon his Majesty's Arms by Sea and Land, and those of his Allies, that he would in Mercy arise, and cause his and our Enemies to be scattered, that those that hate him may be made to flee before him; that our gracious God would return to the many thousands of *Israel*, that God himself would tread down our Enemies, that he would give them as dust to the Sword, and as driven stubble to our Bow; that he would go forth with our Armies, and teach the Hands of those, who jeopard their Lives in the high Places of the Field for us, to war, and their Fingers to fight; that at length Peace may be within our Borders, and Prosperity within our Palaces, that we may be a People saved  
of

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of the Lord, who is the Shield of our Help  
and the Sword of our Excellency.

LET us beg of the Lord that he would make Trade to revive and flourish at home, and Navigation abroad; that both *Iffachar* may rejoice in his Tents, and *Zebulon* in his going out; that the Lord would appoint Salvation for Walls and Bulwarks, that he would rebuke the Winds and the Seas, and command a Calm. Especially let us have the Prosperity of Religion at heart, that we may fervently beg that the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end, that our Redeemer would come to *Zion*, and turn away Ungodliness from *Jacob*; that Iniquity, as ashamed, may stop its mouth, that the Lord would cause the unclean Spirit of Error and Prophanity to pass out of this land, and that he would turn to the People a pure Language, that they may call on the Name of the Lord.

LET us earnestly beg that the Lord would save *Zion*, and build the Cities of *Judah*; that our eyes may see *Jerusalem*, the City of our Solemnities, a quiet Habitation, a Tabernacle that shall not be taken down, that none of the stakes thereof may be removed, nor any of the cords thereof broken; but that the glorious Lord may be to us a place  
of



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of broad Waters and Streams, that Watchmen may be set on our Walls, which may never hold their peace day nor night, and give him no rest, till he establish and make *Jerusalem* a Praise in the Earth. May the Lord himself pour down a Spirit of Prayer and Supplication upon us all, that we may wrestle earnestly with him, so as to prevail for obtaining these Blessings, and may he give his Blessing to his Word; and to his Name be Praise.

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*F I N I S.*